

John Clark to Andrew Jackson, May 24, 1819, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN CLARK TO JACKSON.1

1 This letter illustrates well the petty jealousies which lay beneath many a political contest of the day of personal politics. It was not creditable to Jackson that he lent himself to Clark's schemes against Crawford, nor to Clark that he fell in so readily with Jackson's hostility toward the same man.

Milledgeville, May 24, 1819.

Sir, Your letter of the 20th Ultimo has been received and perused with feelings of much interest and attention. You request to be furnished with such facts as I may be in possession of relative to the public or private Character of Wm. H. Crawford Esqr. It is true as you suppose that Mr Crawford commenced his political career in this State, and as early as the first of the year 1801. Since which time by means of his wondrous talent at lying, finesse and political chicanery, he has been rising in public estimation. To trace him Sir thro' all his dark and subtle windings, by the exposure of facts and incidents to throw his Character into a Just light, will require some time and I regret it the more since I perceive that the veil which he spreads over him, has not proved impenetrable to the scrutiny of your eye. I should be glad to put you at once in possession of every fact and every cir[cu]mstance, which would tend to afford you a more distinct view of the *man as he is* .

It may not be improper here to remark that for many years there has not subsisted the most cordial friendship between Mr Crawford and myself. A warfare both political and

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personal has existed wherein that man left nothing undone on his part that could be done to my injury without any moral regard to the means of it's accomplishment. Mr. Crawford's conduct during which time I have noted and remembered; and I speak from my heart when I say that I deem it a duty which I owe myself, my family and my country to place it before the public. I may be blamed for not having done so long ago, but if I had, Crawford had such a faction in this State it would have availed nothing and he has worshipers yet. The publication will consist mostly of documents of various kinds, together with some few explanatory remarks. It will appear in the pamphlet form, on account of its length and will be more lasting.² When this is done which shall be as soon as possible, it will afford me much pleasure to furnish you with a copy. And here I will add that I have little doubt of being able to satisfy all impartial minds of the almost unparalleled baseness, for a man to have been guilty of and rise into power as Wm. H Crawford has. If infamous conduct manifested towards a private individual can disqualify for holding any public trust then should this man be hissed from the Councils of the nation and be made to fill that Station in life which he so Justly deserves.

² See p. 420, n. 3, post.

There are some circumstances of recent date which relate in part to yourself, I will here mention. You may have observed in a news paper issued here (Georgia Journal I believe) the 25th, of August last an Editorial remark which went to announce the "equal division" of the Cabinet on the question (which was said to have been made) of arresting General Jackson for conduct in the Seminole War. on the 16th, of the same month (which was the day before the Sale of the African negroes here), Mr Crawford, T. Cobb in Company, arrived in Milledgeville, the evening of the same day they spent at the house of Mr F. Grantland one of the Editors at that time of the Journal, from whom it was understood the next morning that there had been this division. now if Mr Crawford did not give this information here himself, he informed Mr Cobb and no doubt with the view of his repeating it. Had Mr. C. been friendly disposed towards our illustrious Chief Magistrate or had he

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regarded the welfare of the nation as he ought, I should not suppose he would have divulged the secrets of the Cabinet and of which he was a member.

Again after those Gentlemen left Milledgeville which was on the 17th, (August) and while on the same tour at Monticello Mr Cobb was heard to say that Genl Jackson had bearded the Administration. all these circumstances tho' trivial in themselves certainly tend to show the united enmity in some degree of those Gentlemen to the President as well as yourself. Further it is well understood by some here that the two pieces signed A. B. published in the Journal last year (which I presume you have seen or heard of) were handed to the printer in Cobbs name, the first no doubt he was the real Author of. When the second made its appearance Mr. Crawford was in this State and I think it not unfair to believe that he was with Mr Cobb when it was written.

From what I have here said you will readily perceive that I feel myself at liberty and that it will afford me much pleasure to give you any information within my power that will tend to elucidate the Character of Wm. H Crawford Esqr. And I should be happy to hear from you upon this or any other subject that you may think proper to Communicate.

With high respect and esteem

P S You have no doubt observed in the news papers mention made of Wm. H. Crawford Esqr having informed the managers of the Colonizing Society of a number of negroes advertised to have been sold here on the 4th of this month. which negroes are a part of those taken some time since from the Agent and Mr Gross and which Mr Crawford when here the 17th of August recommended the selling of. (I mean those that were then disposed of) how his Conduct in those two cases can be reconciled, he I suppose can tell. It is believed by some here that he recommended selling the negroes thinking probably that it would prevent enquiry and exposure of his friend D. B. Mitchell, who no doubt Sanctioned their being brought into the Country and was interested and instrumental in its being done. Which would in my opinion be made [to] appear if there was an enquiry

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authorised or directed to be made, so as to compell persons to give testimony of all they knew respecting the business.

Yours respectfully